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24
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Briefer: Sean McCormack, Spokesman

QUESTION: Have you received requests from the EU for cooperation into the reported secret prisons in Europe?

MR. MCCORMACK: I have checked on that, George, and we have not, at this point, received any requests from the EU concerning those news reports. My understanding from reading the news reports is that the EU is actually make requests of member states or potential member states, states with which they are having accession talks. So at this point, we have not received any inquiries from the EU on those news stories.

QUESTION: A follow-up on that?

MR. MCCORMACK: Jonathan, yeah.

QUESTION: Does the International Red Cross have access to all U.S. prisoners?

MR. MCCORMACK: This is a topic that came up yesterday and we --

QUESTION: Okay. Apologies.

MR. MCCORMACK: We talked a bit about it yesterday. We have an ongoing dialogue with the ICRC on a number of -- across a number of different issues. And that dialogue and the contents of that dialogue, by tradition, has been confidential and that has served the aims and work of the ICRC, so I have to respect the diplomatic confidentiality.

There have been news reports and the ICRC has commented in public that it has requested access to all detainees worldwide. And again, we have a dialogue with the ICRC on a number of different issues and we try to engage them as best we can.

I would note that the Department of Defense has -- the ICRC has access to all Department of Defense facilities where detainees are held, whether that's in Iraq or Afghanistan or Guantanamo Bay. We've talked a lot about that over the past couple of days.

If there are any future inquiries from the ICRC on these news accounts, I would expect that we would receive those inquiries and continue our dialogue with the ICRC on the broader issue of detainees.

QUESTION: I think that's a confusing answer though, Sean. You said they have access to DOD facilities in Iraq, Guantanamo and Afghanistan and if they made requests, you would, I guess consider them in the future, you said. But they have made requests that, if you have other locations, they want to visit these detainees.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

MR. MCCORMACK: As I said, you know, I have to separate out these two things. We do have an ongoing dialogue with the ICRC. We have -- on any given day, we probably have a meeting with the ICRC on a topic of mutual interest, whether it's detainees or other issues. As I said before, those -- that dialogue is a confidential dialogue. It's a confidential diplomatic exchange. I'm not at liberty to discuss the contents of those dialogues.

And as I said, I have seen ICRC statements, public statements in the past, concerning requests to see all detainees. I can only say that we have an ongoing dialogue with the ICRC on questions related to detainees. And I did point out that the ICRC has access to all detainees held by the Department of Defense in those locations where they may be held, whether it's Iraq, Afghanistan or Guantanamo Bay.

QUESTION: I guess my question is have you not received, through your private channels then, a request from the ICRC? Is the only request you know about the one that you've read publicly in news reports?

MR. MCCORMACK: Like I said, we have -- you know, we have meetings every single day or on any given day we may have a meeting with the ICRC if -- you know, based on their public statements, which again, I have read recently. They said they would renew their request to see all detainees based on the recent news reports that have been out in *The Washington Post* and the *Financial Times* and in other news organizations. And I fully expect that, based on their public statements, that they would renew that request.

QUESTION: So they haven't --

MR. MCCORMACK: And as I said, we have meetings -- we have meetings --

QUESTION: You're just being repetitive. Have they or have they not made the request?

MR. MCCORMACK: Again, we have -- you know, we meet with the ICRC. I will try to keep you updated as best I can if, in fact, they have renewed that request. There are bounds in which -- by which I am constrained in terms of the confidentiality of the ICRC dialogue. I will do my best to keep you updated on any requests that they have made.

QUESTION: Without addressing the question of requests they have made, the original question -- well, not the original, but the first follow-up -- was does it have access to all detainees worldwide, not necessarily limited to DOD detainees?

MR. MCCORMACK: Right. And as I said, we do have -- we have a dialogue with them on that issue.

QUESTION: It doesn't go to dialogue. It goes to do they have access to.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

MR. MCCORMACK: As I said, they -- and we've talked about this over the past couple of days. They have access to Department of Defense detainees at facilities where those detainees are held, whether that's Guantanamo Bay, Afghanistan or Iraq.

QUESTION: Have you been able to give any reassurances to countries like Poland, Bulgaria, Romania that there are no secret U.S. prisons?

MR. MCCORMACK: I am not aware of any particular requests for information that we have received from any of those countries. If we do receive any requests for information or discussion about the recent news reports, I am sure, as a friend and ally, we will, of course, have a discussion with those countries and provide the answers to those questions to the best of our ability.

Yes.

QUESTION: Does the Secretary plan to meet with the ICRC anytime soon to discuss this issue and have they approached her directly for a meeting? And also, you said you haven't received any requests from the EU or countries about this, but have you received any complaints through diplomatic cables or other means to complain about this?

MR. MCCORMACK: On the first of your questions, I'll check to see if there's been any requests for a meeting between Secretary Rice and Mr. Kellenberger. They have met in the past. They have a good working relationship. And if there are any future meetings between the two of them, we'll certainly let you know. We'll keep you updated on those.

As -- and the second part of your question?

QUESTION: Is whether you've had any complaints. You haven't received requests, but have you received complaints?

MR. MCCORMACK: Right. In the form of demarche? Let me check. The latest information that I have is we have not received any demarches, but I'll check this afternoon and see if there are any updates to that.

QUESTION: How about complaints in any other form? You say you haven't received any demarches. What about any -- something less official than a demarche? Would you include that?

MR. MCCORMACK: I'll check. Sure, I'll be happy to include that. Sure.

QUESTION: To follow up on that, did you receive any request from your allies, Poland and Romania, that you clarify your public position on that so they don't have too many problems with EU?

MR. MCCORMACK: I'm not aware of any such requests.

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QUESTION: Sean, I'm just confused. I mean, these stories are either true or not true. And if they're not true, surely you would want to clarify them. And I just wonder, you know, you just, you know -- fueling the suspicions exist by not just ruling this out.

MR. MCCORMACK: I'd be happy to repeat the answers that I've given to you over the past couple of days on this issue. We had this exact same -- this exact same question yesterday and I don't really have anything to add to the matter -- on the matter.

Yes, Joel. Yes.

QUESTION: Is that -- is that classified information or you believe it would come from classified sources?

MR. MCCORMACK: As I said yesterday, I've seen these news reports and inasmuch as they make allegations about potentially classified information, I would not be at liberty from the podium to discuss anything that might be potentially classified.

Yes.

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